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- International Conference on Illegal Trade and Exploitation of Wild Flora and Fauna in Africa

24th AU Summit Adopts Continent's Agenda 2063, and Key Decisions to Guide Africa on Crucial Negotiations on Climate and Post 2015 Development Agenda

The 24th Ordinary Session of the African Union (AU) held on 30th and 31st January, in Addis Ababa brought President Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe at the helm of the organization as the new Chairperson and made some of its momentous decisions on peace, security and health issues amid the upsurge of the Boko Haram terrorist group in Nigeria and neighboring countries, the Ebola Outbreak in West Africa and the strife in South Sudan among others.

The Heads of State and Government's deliberations resulted in a number of key decisions on important regional and global initiatives and processes such as the AU Agenda 2063, climate negotiations, Post 2015 Development Agenda - SDGs, and the Reform of the UN Security Council among others. They adopted the AU Agenda 2063 framework, a strategy to optimize the use of Africa's resources in order to achieve the AU's vision of "An Integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in the global arena". The fact that the 24th Assembly was held under the theme of "Women Empowerment and Development towards Africa's Agenda 2063" obviously positions women and youth as the greatest asset for the continent as it strives to deliver positive socio-economic transformation predicated on sound environmental management within the next 50 years. Some of the other key outcomes included:



Heads of States during the 24th AU Summit in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

- The establishment of an African Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (African CDC) will be established by mid-2015.
- The request to the AUC to facilitate the implementation of the Work Programme on Climate Action for Africa (WPCCAA), with an invitation to AMCEN and the African Group of Negotiators (AGN) to take into account the WPCCAA in their negotiations and engagement with other partners in the climate change processes and fora. With regard to Africa's engagement in Climate Negotiations President Abdel Fattah El Sisi of Egypt formally assumed the leadership of the CAHOSCC.
- The endorsement of the report of the High Level Committee on Post 2015 Development Agenda coordinated by President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf of Liberia, and the formation as well as the Terms of Reference of the African Group of Negotiators, which shall be the single negotiating body acting on behalf of the continent. The High Level Committee was mandated to coordinate Africa's contribution to the International Conference on Funding for De-

velopment. The report of the High Level Committee called on African Heads of State and Government to ensure that the concerns and voices of the region are heard at the third International Conference on Financing for Development to be held in Addis Ababa in July 2015. The upcoming Conference of African Ministers of Finances and Economies CAMEF scheduled for the last week of March could serve as an ideal platform for the preparations.

- The Republic of South Africa offered to host the 25th Ordinary Session of the Assembly of the African Union, which will be held between June 8-15, 2015.

Participating in the summit, the UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon reminded African Leaders that “Momentum is growing towards a meaningful, universal climate change agreement in Paris in December. No continent has more at stake in these negotiations than Africa. The potential for success on all of these efforts starts here in Addis Ababa in July, when we will gather for a pivotal Financing for Development Conference. We count on leaders to make serious commitments. Without resources, our commitments to sustainable development will amount to little more than fine words on paper.”

UNEP delegation led by Achim Steiner the Executive Director used this platform as an opportunity to tighten links and partnerships with relevant African Countries and group of countries such as the African SIDS, Mauritania and Congo. Discussions also touched on UNEP support in regard of clean and renewable initiatives across the African continent; UNEP support towards the international conference on illegal trade of African fauna and flora, a conference that is expected to help Africa shape and implement an effective strategy to combat illegal trade of African fauna and flora in collaboration.

UNEP Chief Discusses Implementation of Samoa Pathways Framework with Leaders of African Small Islands Developing States

On the sidelines of the AU, UNEP Executive Director, Achim Steiner met with a group from the Small Island Developing States (SIDS) to discuss the follow-up to the Samoa Pathways Framework.



UNEP Executive Director Achim Steiner with the President of Mauritania on the sidelines of the 24th AU Summit

Climate change is a global threat, but for many SIDS, the challenges are more dramatic because of their size, isolation, exposure to natural hazards and other factors. This makes them particularly vulnerable to climate change impacts on availability of water, food security and energy.

At the meeting - attended by the President of Comoros Ikililou Dhoinine, President of Cape Verde Jorge Carlos Fonseca and Vice President of Seychelles Danny Faure, as well as the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of Madagascar and Sao Tome and the ambassador of Mauritius, the group shared testimonies of their vulnerability and stressed the need for innovation in areas such as renewables and financing. Seychelles placed a particular emphasis on the development of a "vulnerability index" to effectively assess the level of exposure of SIDS to the climate change risk. The group sought to strengthen the partnership between UNEP and African SIDS under the Samoa Pathways Framework with a focus on increasing their adaptive capacity to climate change, and supporting their transition to blue economy within post 2015 Development Agenda.

Mr Steiner lauded the vision and leadership of SIDS Governments in setting their environmental and sustainable development agenda, particularly in respect of climate change, and briefed the group on the proposed Africa 2020 Access to Renewables Initiative and outlined how UNEP stands ready to assist SIDS in developing their blue economies and oceans governance.

Brazil and UNEP Formalize Cooperation on Environmental Law for African Portuguese-speaking Countries

On 30 January 2015, UNEP Deputy Executive Director, Ibrahim Thiaw, President of Brazilian Association of Judges, Joao Ricardo dos Santos Costa and Antonio Herman Benjamin President of World Commission on Environmental Law signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to reinforce the collaboration between African Portuguese-speaking countries and UNEP in the field of environmental rule of law. The African Portuguese-speaking includes Angola, Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, and São Tomé and Príncipe.

The World Commission of Environmental Law (WCEL) a global network of environmental law and policy experts volunteer their knowledge and services to IUCN activities, especially to those of the IUCN Law Programme while the Brazilian Association of Judges is a national organization that represents the judges of Brazil.

The main aim of the MOU is to provide a framework of cooperation and understanding, and to facilitate collaboration between the Parties to further their shared goals and objectives with regard to strengthening capacities of the Lusophone Countries in the fields of environment law and governance.

During the signing ceremony that took place at UNEP Headquarters in Nairobi, Mr. Thiaw emphasized the importance of this step towards building a strong judiciary system that will set the stage among the Portuguese-speaking countries and an important moment for UNEP to enhance the environmental rule of law and its relations with these countries.

Mr. Joao Ricardo reiterated the dedication of the Brazilian Association of Judges to phase-out legal problems of our times as environmental legal issues symbolize issues that humanity faces; adding that the objective of the MoU was to work with UNEP and governments of Lusophone countries in Africa in the area of capacity building of the environmental law judiciary through experience sharing with these countries.

The Director of UNEP Division of Environmental Law and Conventions, Ms. Elizabeth Mrema, also participating in the ceremony called for increased cooperation between the Judiciary Training Institute and UNEP in enhancing environmental rule of law.

The visiting delegation also met with senior judiciary officials from Kenya at the Judiciary Training Institute. The meeting was officiated by Hon. Lady Justice Kalpana H. Rawal, Deputy Chief Justice of Kenya.



UNEP Deputy Executive Director, Ibrahim Thiaw, Judges Joao Ricardo dos Santos Costa President, Brazilian Association of Judges Joao Ricardo dos Santos Costa, Antonio Herman Benjamin President, World Commission on Environmental Law and Elizabeth Mrema, Director, Division of Environmental Law and Conventions (DELIC)

UNEP Supports Eritrea's Vision of Clean Energy

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) has thrown its weight behind Eritrea's vision of advancing clean energy development in the country. Through the GEF Funded African Rift Geothermal Development Facility project (ARGeo) which promotes geothermal resource exploration, development and utilization in African countries, UNEP is engaged in supporting Eritrea (an "ARGeo country") through the Ministry of Mines and Energy, in the geothermal resource development particularly in the surface exploration of the Alid geothermal prospect in Eritrea. The results of this study will provide information on location of target sites for drilling and minimizes risk of drilling dry wells while maximizing the chance of productive wells. The project will also assist Eritrea in preparing the proposal for the financial support from the Geothermal Risk Mitigation Facility (GRMF) of the African Union Commission-German Development Bank (KfW) for subsequent drilling. This in turn catalyses investment in the sector.

Harnessing the geothermal potential in Eritrea would have a significant impact on the economic development of the country which currently relies on petroleum for its electric power generation and energy. Geothermal energy development in Eritrea will have an important input in alleviating expenditure on foreign currency while safeguarding the environment from adverse impact of fossil fuels.

In this context, a joint UNEP-ICEIDA (Icelandic International development Agency) team visited Eritrea in January 2015. The main objective was to discuss with high level delegates and with geothermal stakeholders in Eritrea on implementing "surface exploration studies" in the Alid geothermal prospect in the framework of the ARGeo project.

The team had fruitful meetings with General Sebhat Efreem, the Minister of Energy and Mines and his team to discuss Eritrea's plans to host the Sixth ARGeo biennial conference (ARGeo-C6) in October 2016. The Ministry of Energy and Mines and various stakeholders affirmed their continuous engagement and support to effective implementation of the surface studies in Alid. Other highlights included interactions with private developers, and a field visit to Alid. Based on the outcome of the field visit and the consultation with the Eritrean team, the UNEP-ICEIDA team developed a detailed implementation plan of the Alid surface studies.

Development of Minamata Initial Assessment Project in Africa

A Regional Inception Workshop for the Africa Minamata Initial Assessment project was held in Nairobi from 24-26 February. This project entitled “Development of Minamata Initial Assessment in Africa” is funded by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and is implemented by UNEP, with UNEP ROA and Ground Work, an NGO based in Durban, South Africa, as Executing Agencies for the project.

The objective of the Project on Mercury Initial Assessment in Africa is to facilitate the ratification and early implementation of the Minamata convention on mercury, and the use of scientific and technical knowledge and tools by national stakeholders in participating countries. Furthermore, the project is expected to achieve important results including: full understanding of comprehensive information on current infrastructure and regulation for mercury management to enable participating countries to develop a sound roadmap for the ratification and early implementation of the Minamata Convention; enhanced understanding on mercury sources and releases to facilitate the development of national priority actions; and improved understanding on national needs and gaps in mercury management and monitoring to enable a better identification of future activities.

The project involves a number of Regional and International Institutions such as UNEP, WHO, Africa Institute, Ground Works, etc. Mercury is widely used in Africa for a variety of applications. It is used for example on the Artisanal and Small-scale Gold mining sector (ASGM) to extract gold from ore by forming “amalgam” – a mixture composed of approximately equal parts mercury and gold. The amalgam is heated, evaporating the mercury from the mixture, leaving the gold. This method of gold extraction is used in the ASGM community because it is cheaper than most alternative methods, can be used by one person independently, and is quick and easy. As Mercury salts inhibit the formation of melanin, resulting in a lighter skin tone, this substance is also used among dark-skinned populations in Africa, Europe and North America.

Opening remarks delivered by Jacob Duer – Head Minamata Interim Secretariat emphasized the need for countries to use strategic approach in setting guidelines and action plans for the elimination of mercury. Given that

Mercury is a common ingredient found in skin lightening soaps and creams. It is also found in other cosmetics, such as eye makeup cleansing products and mascara. Skin lightening soaps and creams are commonly used in certain African and Asian nations.

The workshop was attended by 30 participants from 10 project countries drawn across the continent. It enabled countries to make full use of enhanced existing structures and information available dealing with mercury management to guide ratification and early implementation of the Minamata Convention.

During the workshop participating countries discussed and agreed with the Executing Agencies on the overall project execution and management modalities, as well as the work plans for the two years of the project. At the end of the workshop participants were able to develop strategies and define clear action plans and set clear guidelines towards the elimination of mercury in their respective countries.



workshop Participants

UNDP-UNEP POVERTY-ENVIRONMENT INITIATIVE

Rwanda Reviews Impacts of Fertilizer Use on the Rweru-Mugesera Lake-Wetland Complex

Rwanda, the country of a thousand hills, is a densely populated country whose economy and food security largely depend on agricultural production carried out on steep slopes. Partly as a result of the improper use of fertilizers and soil erosion from the slopes most rivers and streams that recharge Rwanda's lakes and other water bodies have a high sediment and pollutant load impacting the country's water quality. Rwanda's Environment management Authority has commissioned a study on the 'Impact of the Fertilizer Use' with support from the UNDP-UNEP Poverty Environment Initiative.

The study aimed at establishing the occurrence, pollution status and the impacts of agrochemicals in the Rweru-Mugesera lake-wetland complex. The study provided recommendations on the appropriate environmental impact assessment and monitoring approaches and tools for effective environmental planning and management across the country. Some of the study's major recommendations include:

- Mineral fertilizers should only supplement organic fertilizers
- The Government should undertake comparative performance and economic evaluation of the different agricultural production practices including use of mineral fertilizers
- There is a need to provide hands-on training to farmers to enhance their technical skills in handling soil fertility challenges

The stakeholder dialogue during the presentation of the report revealed underlying misconceptions between REMA and the Agriculture sector with regard to the economic, social and environmental costs and benefits arising from fertilizer use in Rwanda. Consensus was reached that fertilizer use has an important role to play towards Rwanda's food security and poverty reduction, and that any negative impacts on environmental sustainability need to be minimized and mitigated against.

To consolidate this consensus the Ministry of Agriculture has requested Poverty-Environment Initiative Rwanda to support it in strengthening its fertilizer policy with a supplementary study on the economic costs and benefits of fertilizer use and transition towards a "smart" agriculture system. *Full report: http://www.unpei.org/sites/default/files/e_library_documents/IMPACT_OF_FERTILIZER_USE_IN_RWANDA_2014.pdf*



Woman on fields, Rwanda ©FAO/Giampiero Diana / FAO

Targeting Key Sectors for Poverty-Environment Mainstreaming in Mauritania

Climate change has exacerbated desertification in Mauritania which has negatively impacted the national economy and greatly contributed to the impoverishment of

the most vulnerable groups. The high pressure on resources coupled with poor environmental governance impedes the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

The UNDP-UNEP Poverty-Environment Initiative (PEI) initiated the Mauritania country programme in 2005 to support the government in addressing these issues and promoting sustainable development. Since then significant progress has been made, for example the country's poverty reduction strategy paper include poverty-environment objectives and the Government dedicates more than 15% of its environmental budget for climate change infrastructure, such as green walls, that will help protect the urban poor in the capital city of Nouakchott.

In 2014, the Government of Mauritania further established a coordination unit for poverty-environment related issues to monitor national poverty-environment progress and committed \$220,000 to the implementation of the PEI programme over four years. To further, increase policy makers' awareness about the importance of addressing poverty-environment issues related with Water and Sanitation, Fisheries, Agriculture and Livestock four policy briefs have to this effect been developed in 2014.

The policy briefs in particular demonstrate the potential benefits of increasing public budget allocations for more sustainable natural resource use to each sector, and opportunities for securing financing for pro-poor sustainability. The policy briefs also include policy recommendations on for example the need for support to small-scale farmers for sustainable crop production and increased yields as well as the optimization of irrigation techniques for better water management that will benefit the poor.

Sector Environmental Sustainability Impacts poverty and development in Mali

Mali's economy relies heavily on the primary sector (agriculture, livestock, fisheries), which contributes to more than 44% of the GDP. However, the country faces numerous environmental constraints which prevent the country from reaching its development goals. Strategies for how to address the issue exist but few adequately reflect the links between environmental sustainability and poverty.

The UNDP-UNEP Poverty-Environment Initiative (PEI) country programme in Mali was initiated in 2005 to support the government in addressing the complex links between poverty and environment and thereby promote a more sustainable development. Since then progress have been made, for example Mali's poverty reduction strategy paper and its 2013 plan for sustainable recovery included poverty-environment objectives and the country's finance law include a poverty-environment annex to ensure funding for the implementation of the objectives.

Building on the knowledge created by the programme a series of policy briefs based on previous PEI Mali studies was issued in 2014 to promote the further use of study findings in upcoming relevant policy processes. The policy briefs highlights the importance of poverty-environment mainstreaming in national policy, budget and monitoring processes as well as in sector plans such as health, agriculture, gender, farming and fishing. For more information see <http://www.unpei.org/latest-news/communicating-poverty-environment-linkages-for-sector-level-influence-in-mali>

March
26-21
2015

The Eighth Joint AUC-ECA Annual Meetings of the AU Conference of Ministers of the Economy and Finance and ECA Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The Conference will tackle the theme, Implementing Agenda 2063 -Planning, Mobilizing and Financing for Development.



March
23
2015

Inception workshop for the East African Dental Amalgam (EADAP) Project Phase I: UNEP and WHO are in the process of initiating demonstration projects for phasing down the use of dental amalgam in different Regions of the world. This project component considers 3 Anglophone countries of Africa: Kenya, Tanzania and Uganda.
Nairobi, Kenya

April
20-22
2015

Africa Regional Environment Information Network Meeting

This Regional Environmental Information Network (REIN) Meeting aims to kick-start the process for preparation of the Sixth Global Environment Outlook Report (GEO-6) in Africa. The meeting will review the current assessment landscape in the region, prepare Africa not only to identify its own environmental assessment priorities, but also provide a mechanism through which such priorities will inform upcoming global assessments. The REIN will also be used to discuss emerging environmental issues within the region, which will in turn contribute to preparation of the UNEP Global Emerging Issues Report.
Johannesburg, South Africa

April
28-30
2015

International Conference on Illegal Trade and Exploitation of Wild Flora and Fauna in Africa

This Conference is expected to produce an international roadmap on key concrete actions to ensure that proposed declarations/actions are fully implemented; and to contribute to a regional strategy for Africa on combatting illegal trade in wild flora and fauna with practical action plans at country, sub-regional, regional and global levels. *Congo Brazaville*

